image
#8
ROSE™
MEREDITH FINCH • IG GUARA

The Story So Far...

In the land of Ttereve, magical ability is a death sentence.

Sir Dante's collapse slows Rose down on her quest to save her friends and causes her to question her suitability as a Guardian. As if that wasn't bad enough, Rose is visited by a ghost from her past.

With the people of Millhaven safe from Drucilla's army, Will's resolve is tested by the news of Ila's loss and what it means for the rebellion.

As Drucilla's prisoner, under threat of torture, how long can Ila truly keep the rebellion's secrets? But even as her resolve is tested, Ila's chance encounter with a prince thought long dead may yet spark hope for the rebels.

The adventure continues in this next exciting chapter of ROSE.

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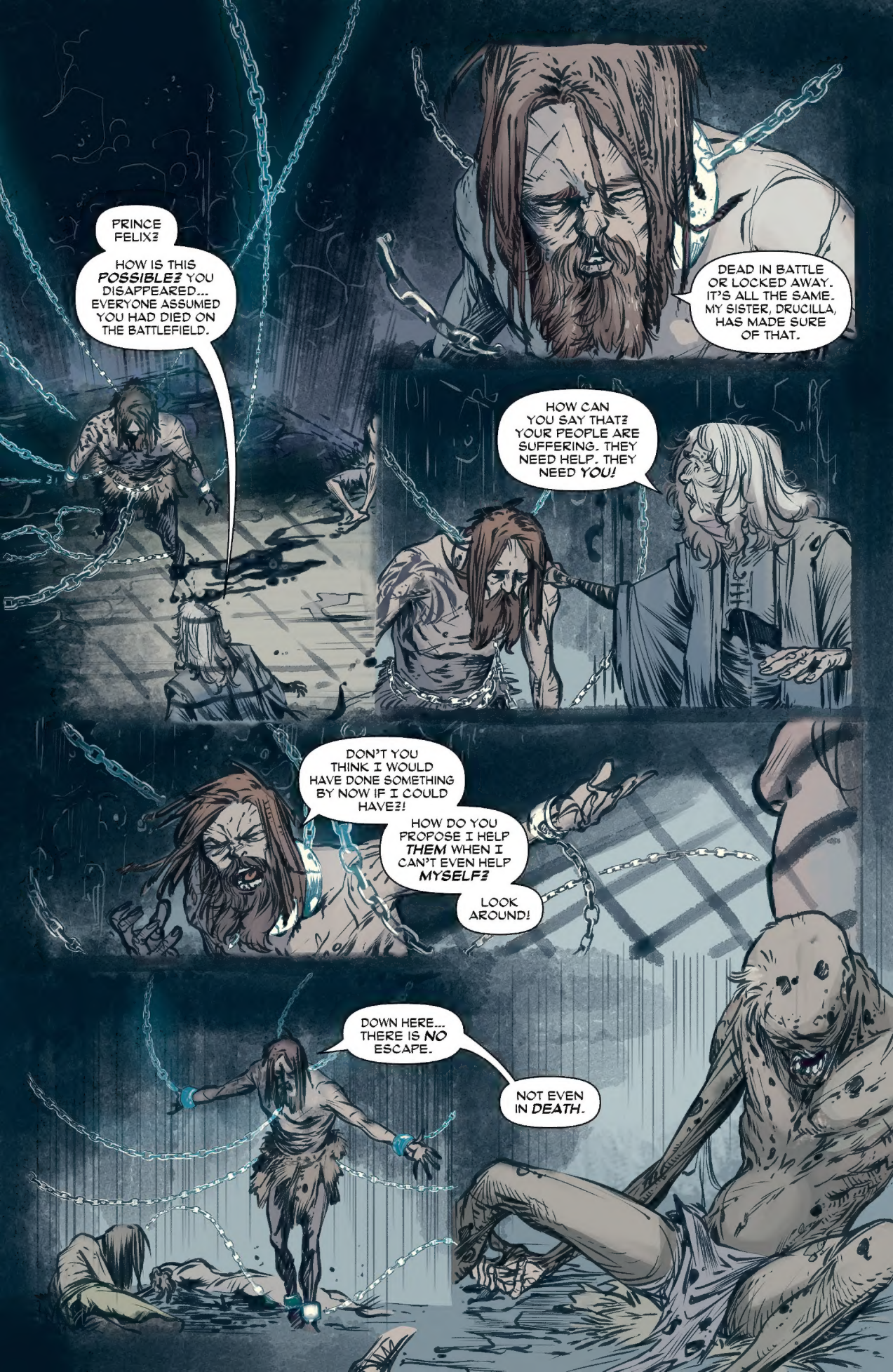
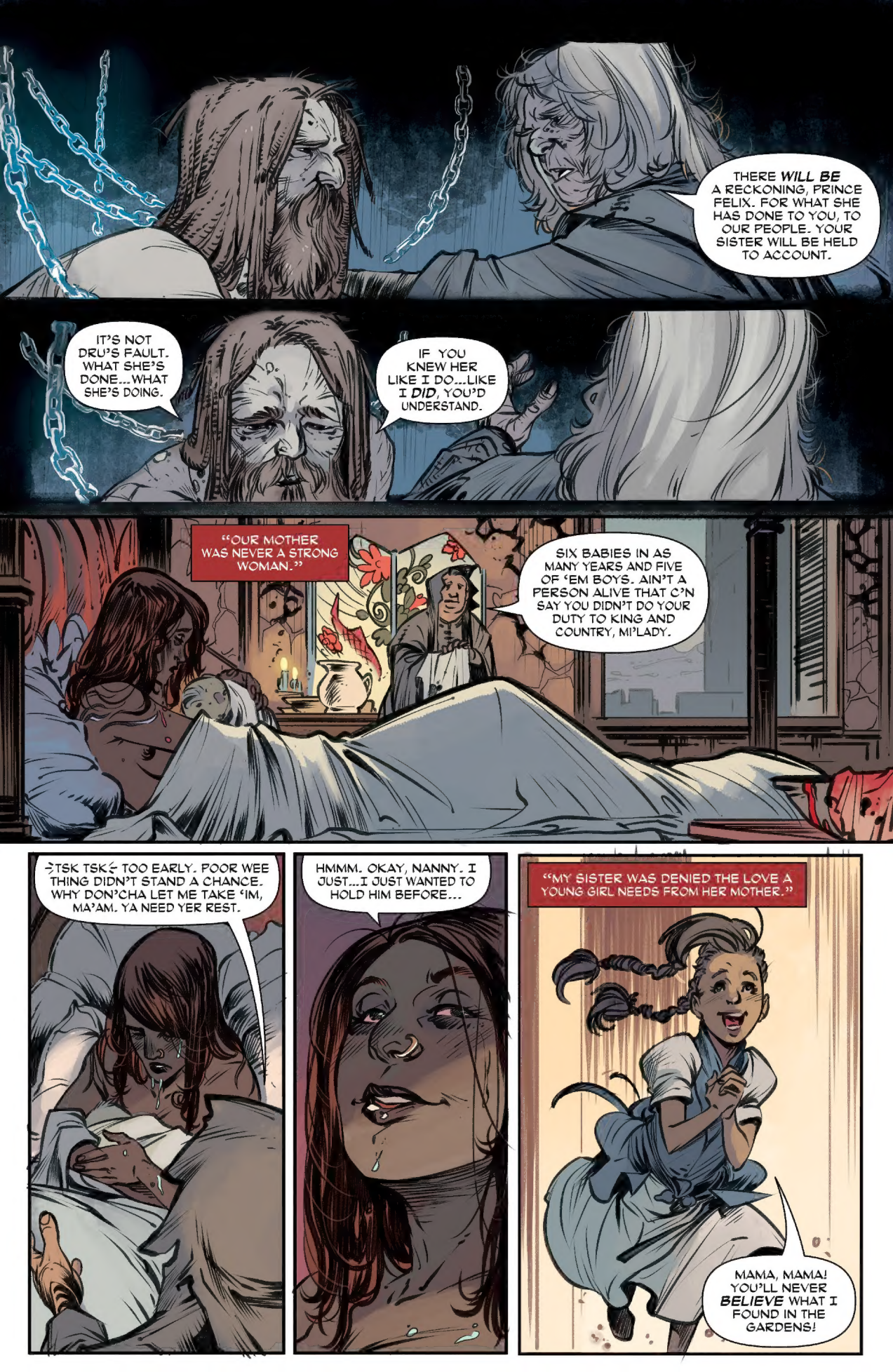
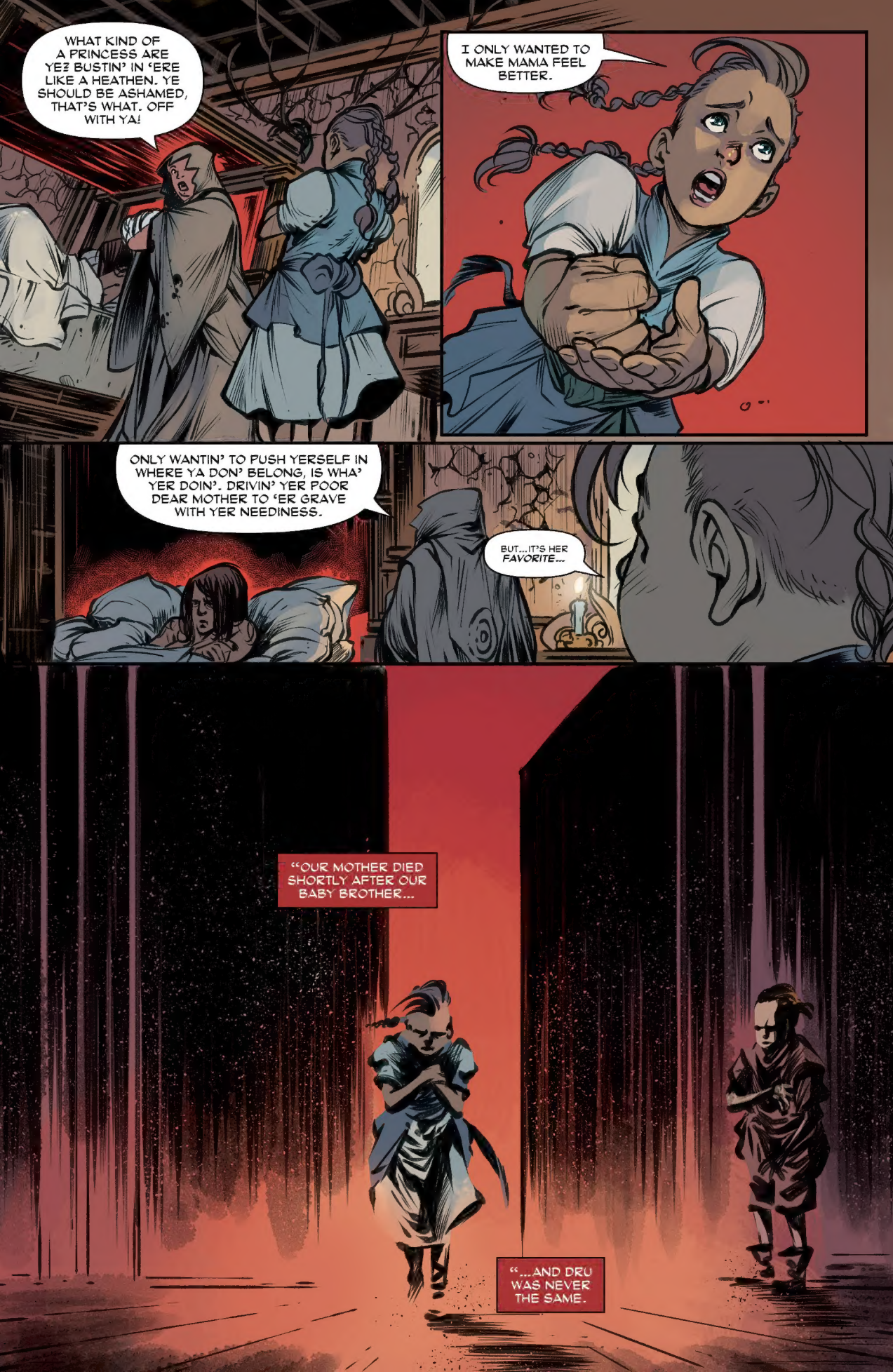
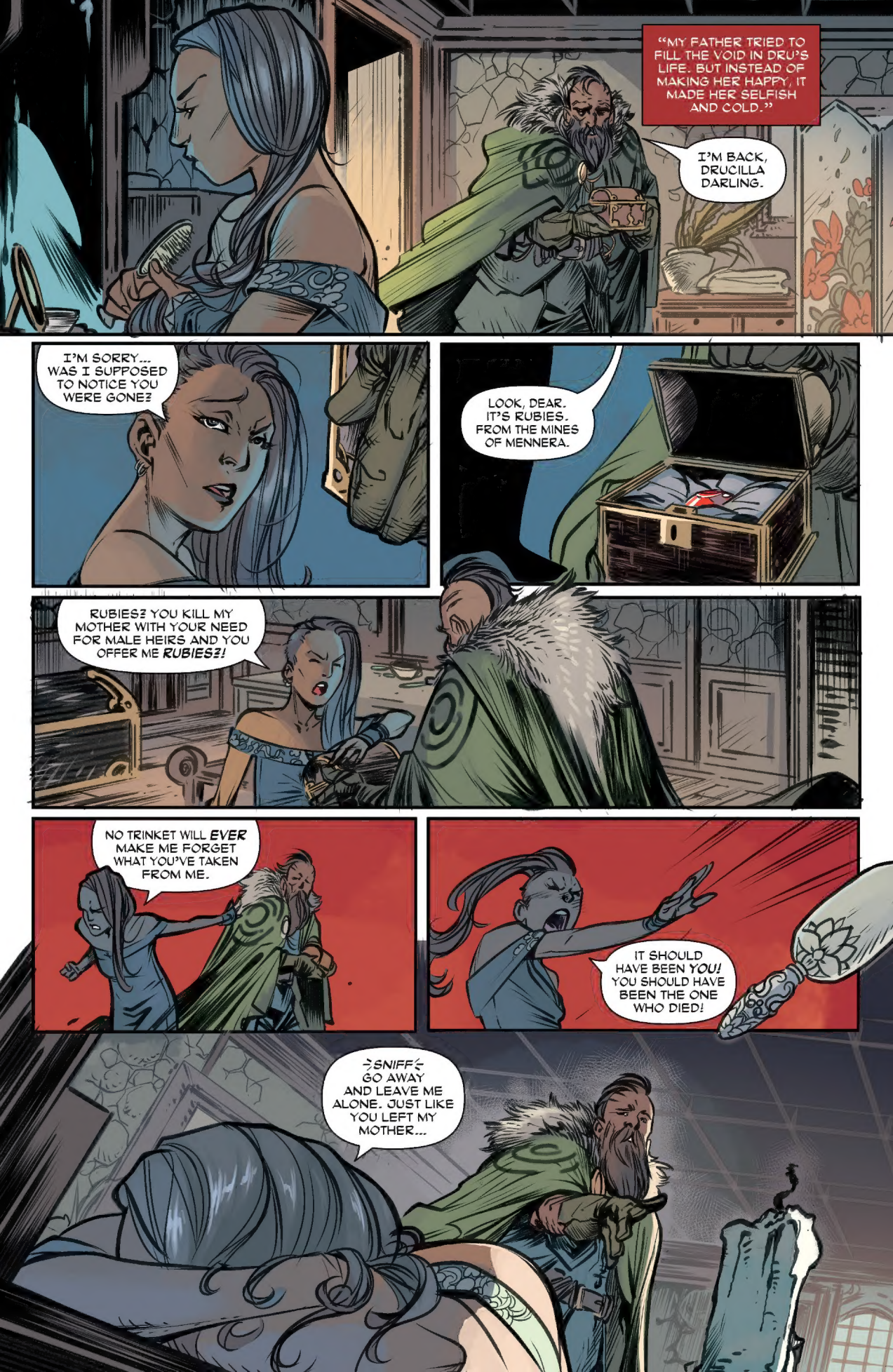
ALL RIGHT, WE'VE CAUGHT UP WITH YOUR BLOODY GHOST BIRD. NOW WHAT?
SHHHH!
BÁN? BÁN, IS THAT YOU? DO YOU REMEMBER ME?
ROSE.
NOT NOW, THORNE. I'VE ALMOST GOT IT.
CAW!
ROSE!
I ALMOST HAD HIM! WHY'D YOU...?!

WE ARE NOT ALONE.

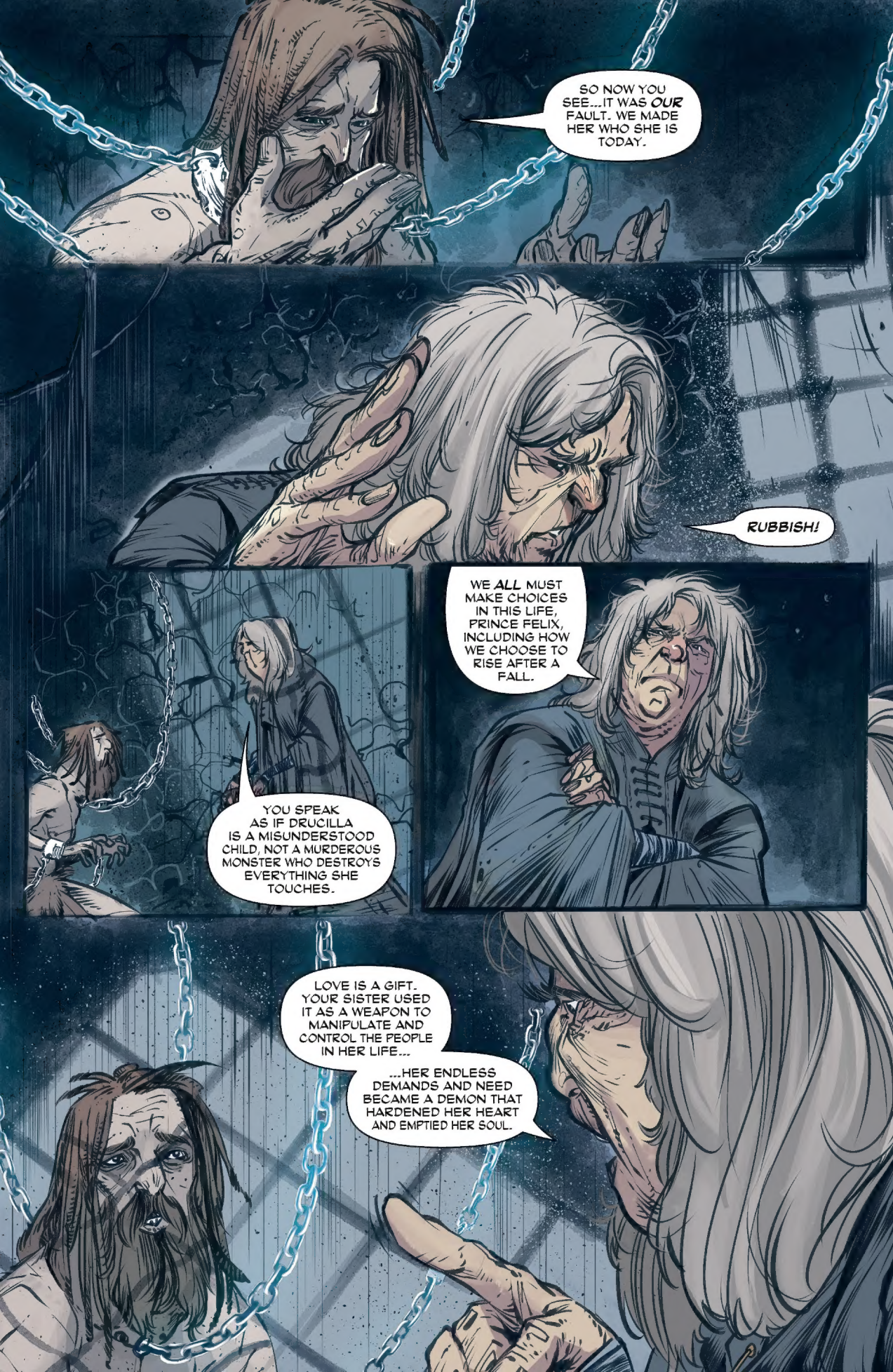

PRINCE FELIX?
HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE? YOU DISAPPEARED... EVERYONE ASSUMED YOU HAD DIED ON THE BATTLEFIELD.
DEAD IN BATTLE OR LOCKED AWAY. IT'S ALL THE SAME. MY SISTER, DRUCILLA, HAS MADE SURE OF THAT.
HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT? YOUR PEOPLE ARE SUFFERING. THEY NEED HELP. THEY NEED YOU!
DON'T YOU THINK I WOULD HAVE DONE SOMETHING BY NOW IF I COULD HAVE?!
HOW DO YOU PROPOSE I HELP THEM WHEN I CAN'T EVEN HELP MYSELF?
LOOK AROUND!
DOWN HERE... THERE IS NO ESCAPE.
NOT EVEN IN DEATH.

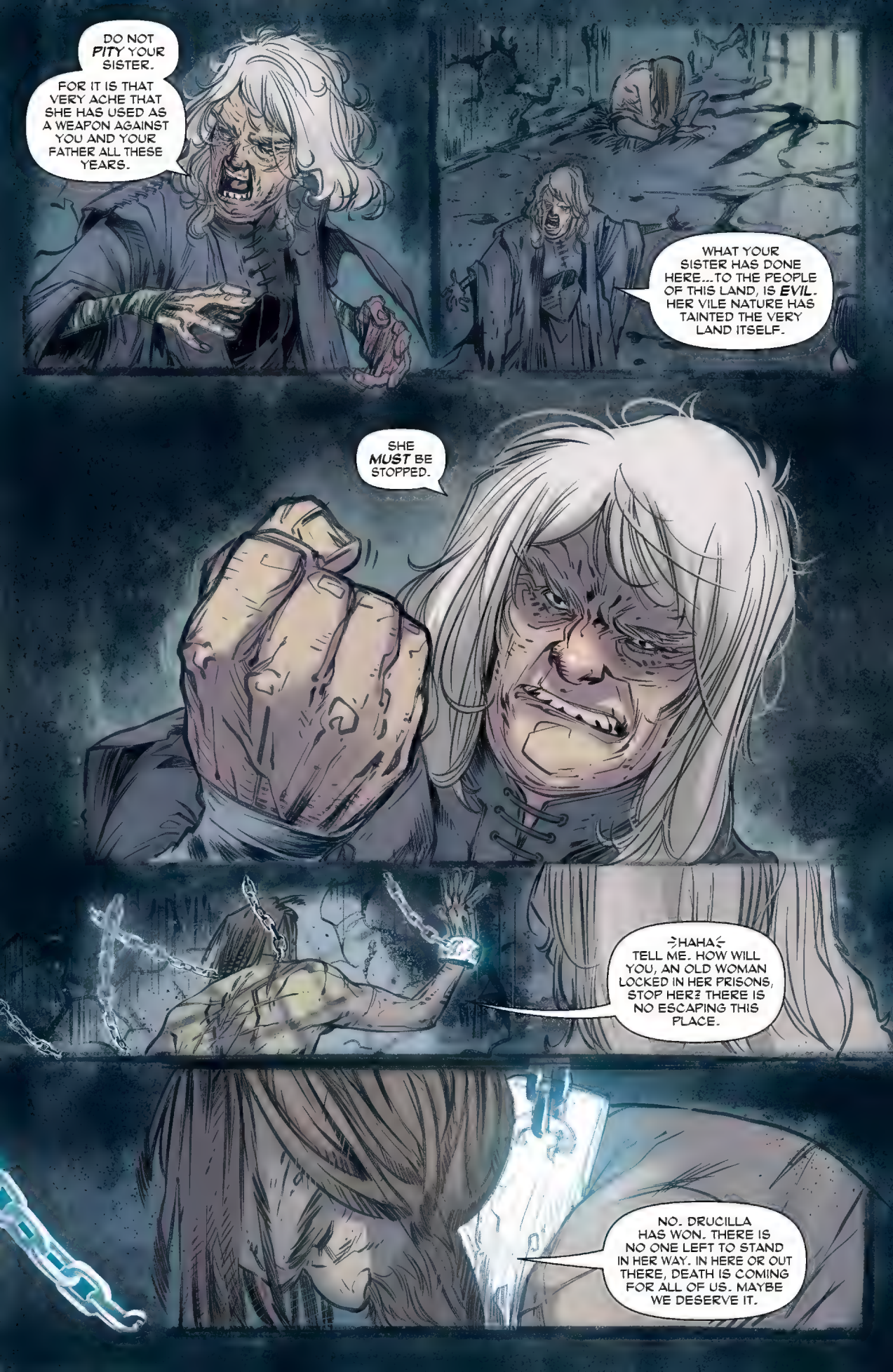

THERE WILL BE A RECKONING, PRINCE FELIX. FOR WHAT SHE HAS DONE TO YOU, TO OUR PEOPLE. YOUR SISTER WILL BE HELD TO ACCOUNT.
IT'S NOT DRU'S FAULT. WHAT SHE'S DONE...WHAT SHE'S DOING.
IF YOU KNEW HER LIKE I DO...LIKE I DID, YOU'D UNDERSTAND.
"OUR MOTHER WAS NEVER A STRONG WOMAN."
SIX BABIES IN AS MANY YEARS AND FIVE OF 'EM BOYS. AIN'T A PERSON ALIVE THAT C'N SAY YOU DIDN'T DO YOUR DUTY TO KING AND COUNTRY, MI'LADY.
TSK TSK TOO EARLY. POOR WEE THING DIDN'T STAND A CHANCE. WHY DON'CHA LET ME TAKE 'IM, MA'AM. YA NEED YER REST.
HMMM. OKAY, NANNY. I JUST...I JUST WANTED TO HOLD HIM BEFORE...
"MY SISTER WAS DENIED THE LOVE A YOUNG GIRL NEEDS FROM HER MOTHER."
MAMA, MAMA! YOU'LL NEVER BELIEVE WHAT I FOUND IN THE GARDENS!


WHAT KIND OF A PRINCESS ARE YE? BUSTIN' IN 'ERE LIKE A HEATHEN. YE SHOULD BE ASHAMED, THAT'S WHAT. OFF WITH YA!
I ONLY WANTED TO MAKE MAMA FEEL BETTER.
ONLY WANTIN' TO PUSH YERSELF IN WHERE YA DON' BELONG, IS WHA' YER DOIN'. DRIVIN' YER POOR DEAR MOTHER TO 'ER GRAVE WITH YER NEEDINESS.
BUT...IT'S HER FAVORITE...
"OUR MOTHER DIED SHORTLY AFTER OUR BABY BROTHER...
"...AND DRU WAS NEVER THE SAME.


"MY FATHER TRIED TO FILL THE VOID IN DRU'S LIFE. BUT INSTEAD OF MAKING HER HAPPY, IT MADE HER SELFISH AND COLD."
I'M BACK, DRUCILLA DARLING.
I'M SORRY... WAS I SUPPOSED TO NOTICE YOU WERE GONE?
LOOK, DEAR. IT'S RUBIES. FROM THE MINES OF MENNERA.
RUBIES? YOU KILL MY MOTHER WITH YOUR NEED FOR MALE HEIRS AND YOU OFFER ME RUBIES?!
NO TRINKET WILL EVER MAKE ME FORGET WHAT YOU'VE TAKEN FROM ME.
IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN YOU! YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN THE ONE WHO DIED!
<SNIFF< GO AWAY AND LEAVE ME ALONE. JUST LIKE YOU LEFT MY MOTHER...

"AFTER OUR MOTHER'S DEATH, NOTHING WAS EVER ENOUGH FOR DRUCILLA."
TOO TALL.
TOO RED.
TOO UGLY.
"THERE WAS NOTHING MY FATHER WOULDN'T DO TO FILL THE VOID IN DRU'S LIFE...OR SO WE ALL BELIEVED."
ARE YOU EVEN LISTENING TO ME, DADDY? DADDY?!
YOUR MARRIAGE TO PHILIP OF LENCHTER CEMENTS AN ALLEGIANCE THAT HAS TAKEN YEARS TO NEGOTIATE.
"BY THEN I WAS BETROTHED AND MY FATHER KNEW DRUCILLA WOULD NEVER TOLERATE ANOTHER WOMAN IN THE CASTLE AS QUEEN. HE WAS ONLY TRYING TO MAKE HER HAPPY. BUT SHE ONLY SAW IT AS ANOTHER BETRAYAL."


SO NOW YOU SEE...IT WAS *OUR* FAULT. WE MADE HER WHO SHE IS TODAY.
RUBBISH!
WE *ALL* MUST MAKE CHOICES IN THIS LIFE, PRINCE FELIX, INCLUDING HOW WE CHOOSE TO RISE AFTER A FALL.
YOU SPEAK AS IF DRUCILLA IS A MISUNDERSTOOD CHILD, NOT A MURDEROUS MONSTER WHO DESTROYS EVERYTHING SHE TOUCHES.
LOVE IS A GIFT. YOUR SISTER USED IT AS A WEAPON TO MANIPULATE AND CONTROL THE PEOPLE IN HER LIFE...
...HER ENDLESS DEMANDS AND NEED BECAME A DEMON THAT HARDENED HER HEART AND EMPTIED HER SOUL.


DO NOT PITY YOUR SISTER.
FOR IT IS THAT VERY ACHE THAT SHE HAS USED AS A WEAPON AGAINST YOU AND YOUR FATHER ALL THESE YEARS.
WHAT YOUR SISTER HAS DONE HERE...TO THE PEOPLE OF THIS LAND, IS EVIL. HER VILE NATURE HAS TAINTED THE VERY LAND ITSELF.
SHE MUST BE STOPPED.
>HAHA< TELL ME. HOW WILL YOU, AN OLD WOMAN LOCKED IN HER PRISONS, STOP HER? THERE IS NO ESCAPING THIS PLACE.
NO. DRUCILLA HAS WON. THERE IS NO ONE LEFT TO STAND IN HER WAY. IN HERE OR OUT THERE, DEATH IS COMING FOR ALL OF US. MAYBE WE DESERVE IT.

ONLY A COWARD WOULD SAY SUCH THINGS.
DO YOUR PEOPLE DESERVE TO BE STARVED? TERRORIZED? NO! AS LONG AS WE CONTINUE TO FIGHT, THERE IS HOPE.
HOPE?! YOU WANT TO TALK TO ME OF HOPE?!
FOR TEN YEARS ALL I HAD WAS HOPE! THAT SHE WOULD COME TO HER SENSES AND STOP THIS MADNESS.
DAY AFTER DAY, WHILE DRUCILLA DID HER WORST. TORTURING ME. HOPE WAS THE ONLY THING THAT KEPT ME FROM BREAKING.
BUT THE DAY SHE LEFT ME TO ROT WITH THE REST OF THE PRISONERS WAS THE DAY I KNEW. THE DAY ANY HOPE I HAD DIED.
BECAUSE THAT DAY I KNEW... I KNEW THAT SHE HAD FOUND HIM. THE ONE THING THAT COULD HAVE SAVED US.

I'M SORRY, THORNE, MY OLD FRIEND...SORRY THAT I WAS NOT KING ENOUGH TO LIVE UP TO YOUR FAITH IN ME. THAT I COULDN'T SAVE YOU...OR OUR KINGDOM.
PRINCE FELIX, YOU ARE WRONG. THORNE IS STILL OUT THERE.
AND I HAVE FOUND HER...
...A GUARDIAN FOR THORNE.
A GUARDIAN TO SAVE US.
YOU LIE. IT'S NOT POSSIBLE. THIS IS ANOTHER ONE OF DRUCILLA'S TRICKS.
HEAR ME, PRINCE FELIX, AND KNOW THAT I SPEAK TRUTH.
THE VERY LAND ITSELF STRUGGLES TO RISE UP AND REJECT YOUR SISTER AND HER REIGN OF TERROR.
ROSE AND THORNE ARE OUR LAST HOPE. THEY ARE THE LAST OF THE GUARDIANS.
THERE REMAINS ONLY ONE QUESTION LEFT TO ANSWER...

WILL YOU BE READY WHEN THEY CALL?
THORNE WAS RIGHT? HIDING HIMSELF AWAY IN THE STONE. IT WORKED?!
THEY NEED OUR HELP. TOGETHER WE MUST FIND A WAY TO DEFEAT...
OI!
EVERYONE UP 'GAINST THE BACKS OF YER CELLS.
S'GONNA BE A HANGIN' T'MORRA AN' THE GENERAL'S ON 'ER WAY DOWN TO TELL US WHO'S IT GONNA BE.
AN' SOMETHIN' TELLS ME I KNOW WHO T'PUT ME MONEY ON.

WHY AREN'T THEY MOVING?
PUT YOUR SWORD AWAY, SIMON. THEY AREN'T ARMED.
THORNE?
I DO NOT KNOW, ROSE. THIS COLLAR... IT BLOCKS MY ABILITY TO FEEL ANYTHING FROM THE LAND.
I DON'T KNOW... I JUST...I THINK THEY WANT TO HELP US.
OF COURSE THEY DO. THAT'S WHY THEY APPEARED SUDDENLY AND SURROUNDED US.
BUT IF WE'RE GOING TO RUN OFF HALF-COCKED TO CHASE WHITE BIRDS INTO UNKNOWN FORESTS, WHY SHOULD CAUTION STOP US NOW?
SHHHHH!
HI. UM...I'M ROSE...

WELCOME, GUARDIAN. LONG HAVE THE PRIESTS OF TERA AWAITED YOUR ARRIVAL.
COME. THE TEMPLE IS READY. THE RITUAL AWAITS.
RITUAL? WHAT IS HE TALKING ABOUT, THORNE?
I DO NOT KNOW. PERHAPS THEY SPEAK OF A WAY TO REMOVE THE COLLAR?

THAT SETTLES IT. WE'RE GOING WITH THEM.
WE NEED TO GET THAT COLLAR OFF OF YOU.
BESIDES, SOMETHING ABOUT THIS JUST FEELS *RIGHT*. WE WERE LED TO THIS PLACE, TO THESE PEOPLE, FOR A REASON.
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE, LITTLE GIRL.
YOU'RE NOT ACTUALLY SAYING WE'RE GOING TO FOLLOW THESE GUYS... WHO APPEARED OUT OF NOWHERE...
...TO SOME RITUAL WE KNOW NOTHING ABOUT. I'VE NEVER EVEN HEARD OF THE PRIESTS OF TERA.
YOU'RE ASSUMING THEY'RE GOING TO HELP YOU. I HAVEN'T HEARD THEM PROMISE ANYTHING LIKE THAT.
FOR ALL YOU KNOW THEY COULD BE WORKING FOR THE QUEEN AND THIS RITUAL INVOLVES CHOPPING OFF YOUR HEAD.
DON'T LET YOUR NEED TO GET REVENGE ON DRUCILLA AND CONNECT WITH THORNE OVERRIDE COMMON SENSE, ROSE.

DEAR SIMON. BÁN WOULDN'T HAVE BROUGHT US HERE IF THEY WEREN'T GOING TO HELP US. BESIDES, I'VE GOT YOU AND THORNE TO PROTECT ME. WHAT COULD POSSIBLY GO WRONG?
SOMETIMES YOU'VE JUST GOTTA HAVE FAITH.
OH, SURE. HAVE FAITH.
EASY FOR HER TO SAY WITH THAT 800-POUND MONSTER BY HER SIDE.

WELCOME TO THE TEMPLE OF TERA.
IF YOU WOULD DIRECT YOUR KHAT TO FOLLOW LANA, SHE WILL TAKE HIM TO A PLACE WHERE HE CAN REST AND BE KEPT COMFORTABLE DURING THE RITUAL.
REST? BUT I THOUGHT...ISN'T THORNE PART OF THE RITUAL?
AREN'T WE HERE SO YOU CAN HELP US GET RID OF THIS HORRIBLE COLLAR?

IT IS BEYOND OUR POWER TO REMOVE THE BOND THAT YOUR COMPANION NOW WEARS.
BUT, PERHAPS THROUGH THE RITUAL OF ILLUMINATION, YOU WILL FIND THE ANSWERS THAT YOU SEEK.
THROUGH OUR EARTH MOTHER, THROUGH TERA, ALL THINGS ARE REVEALED.
THROUGH TERA, ALL THINGS ARE REVEALED.
THROUGH TERA, ALL THINGS ARE REVEALED.

ROSE. STOP! I SWORE TO PROTECT YOU, BUT FOLLOWING A GROUP OF UNKNOWN DRUIDS INTO A HOLE IN THE GROUND FEELS MORE LIKE A SUICIDE MISSION.
THOUGH I AM LOATH TO ADMIT IT, THE KNIGHT SPEAKS SENSE, ROSE. I DON'T LIKE THIS. I CANNOT FOLLOW AND PROTECT YOU IN THERE. I AM WORRIED.
BUT WHAT IF THIS IS THE ONLY WAY TO REMOVE THE COLLAR?
AND... BÁN...
NO.
MAYBE THESE PEOPLE CAN HELP AND MAYBE THEY CAN'T. BUT WE WON'T KNOW IF WE DON'T TRY.

I CAN'T WALK AWAY FROM WHAT MIGHT BE OUR ONLY CHANCE TO FREE YOU, THORNE.
PLEASE.
SAVE YOUR EMOTIONAL MANIPULATION FOR SOMEONE WITH THE ABILITY TO CARE.
I OWE YOU A DEBT. IF THIS IS HOW IT'S REPAID, ALL THE BETTER FOR ME.
KILLING A PRIEST WOULDN'T BE THE WORST THING I'VE DONE ALL DAY.
THANK YOU, SIMON.
BE SAFE, LITTLE ONE.

IF YOU HAD FOLLOWED MY INSTRUCTIONS AND BROUGHT ME THE GIRL, THE KHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN COMPELLED TO FOLLOW.
NOW INSTEAD OF CAPTURING THE LAST OF THE GUARDIANS, YOU HAVE UNITED HER WITH THE ONE THING NECESSARY FOR HER POWER TO FULLY MANIFEST...HER KHAT.
DID I LEAVE ANYTHING OUT? GIVE ME A REASON NOT TO PUNISH YOU FURTHER.
PLEASE! WAIT!
WE WERE ABLE TO COLLAR THORNE. THEY WON'T BE ABLE TO FORM THE BOND AS LONG AS HE IS BOUND. HE'LL BE COMPELLED TO OBEY ANYONE WHO HOLDS HIS LEASH. VICTORY CAN STILL BE YOURS, MY QUEEN.
MY VICTORY WAS NEVER IN DOUBT.
NEXT MONTH: RESTEN...

NEXT MONTH

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PRISM 01

SLOANE LEONG

SNEAK PREVIEW

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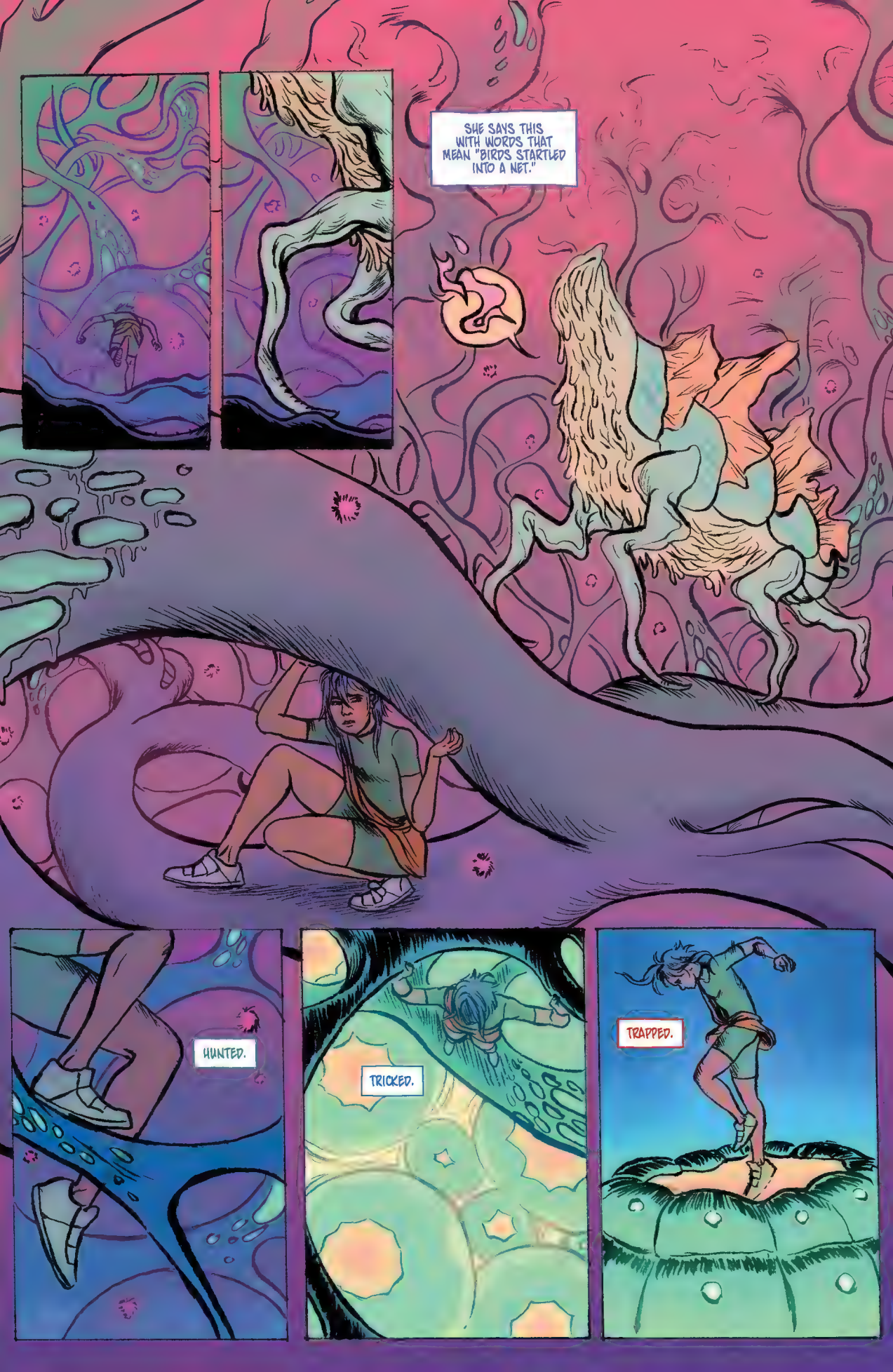
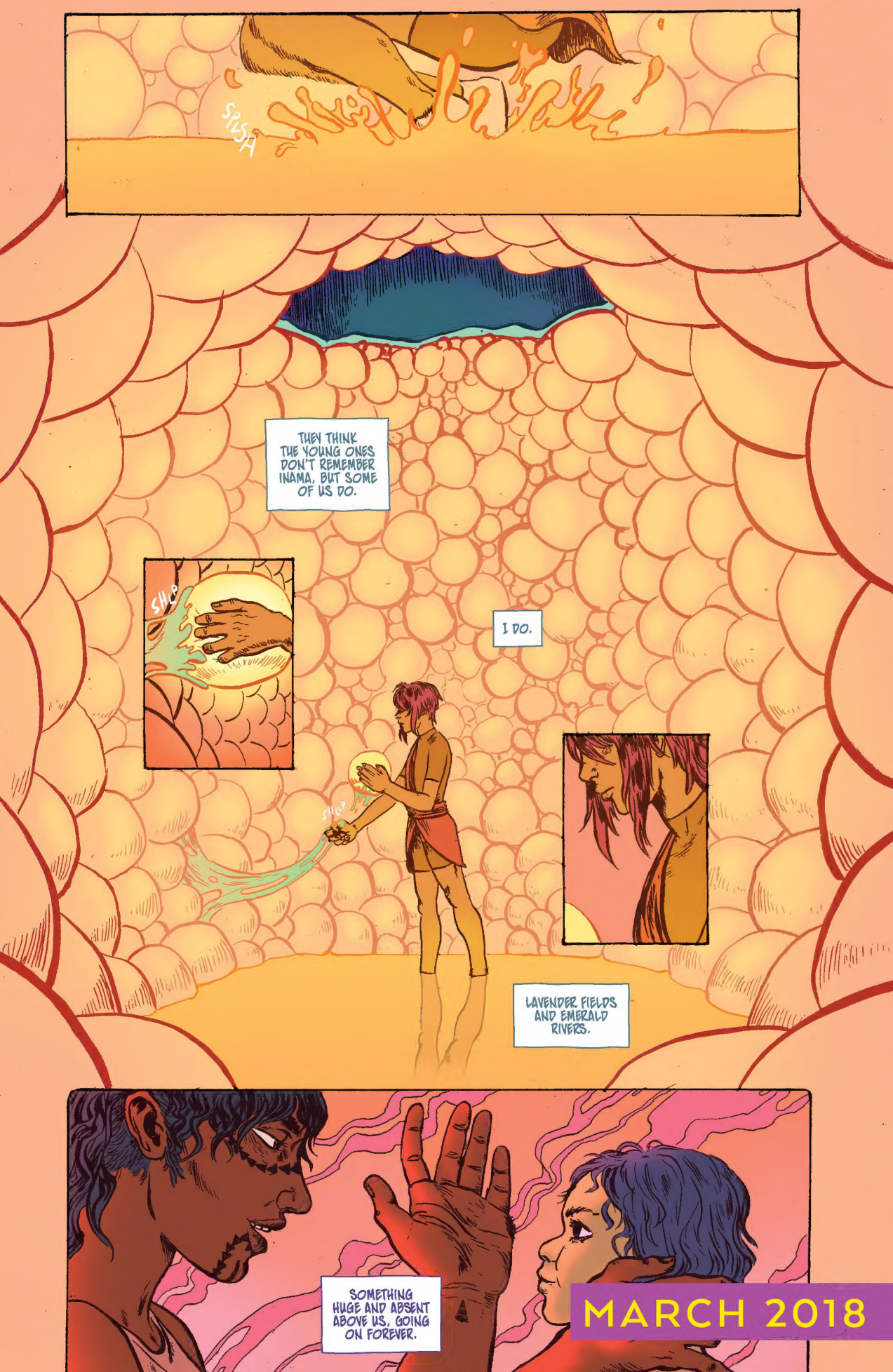
"WE WERE COWARDS ONCE, YOU AND I."

FIRST MOTHER WHISPERS THIS TO AUNT DURING PRAYERS.
THEY THINK I CAN'T HEAR IT BENEATH THE SINGING.
I DON'T KNOW MY MOTHER'S GODS BUT I LIKE TO THINK I DO THEIR WILL.


SHE SAYS THIS WITH WORDS THAT MEAN "BIRDS STARTLED INTO A NET."
HUNTED.
TRICKED.
TRAPPED.


SPLSH
THEY THINK THE YOUNG ONES DON'T REMEMBER INAMA, BUT SOME OF US DO.
SHLP
I DO.
SHLUP
LAVENDER FIELDS AND EMERALD RIVERS.
SOMETHING HUGE AND ABSENT ABOVE US, GOING ON FOREVER.
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From writers Justin Jordan, (LUTHER STRODE, SPREAD, DEAD BODY ROAD) and Nikki Ryan

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